

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 SCCT-01 OMB-01 EB-07

SAM-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 PM-03 L-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 RSC-01 USIA-06 PRS-01

SP-02 IO-10 NIC-01 ACDA-05 /093 W

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R 081338Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2183

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 0632

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PINT, MASS, KU

SUBJECT: THE SECURITY SITUATION IN KUWAIT: INTERNAL THREATS AND
THE GOK'S ABILITY TO MEET THEM

REF: A) KUWAIT 0546 B) KUWAIT 0561 C) KUWAIT 0612 D) KUWAIT 0618

SUMMARY; THIS ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL THREATS WITHIN KUWAIT IS FIFTH IN A SERIES DISCUSSING THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF US/KUWAITI RELATIONS AND THE FACTORS THAT WILL INFLUENCE THEM. ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE AN INCREASE IN INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN KUWAIT OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, IT IS UNLIKELY THERE WILL BE A RADICAL POLITICAL CHANGE OR COUP. TWO PRIME REASONS ARE THE LACK OF AN ORGANIZED DISSIDENT MOVEMENT (NOR IS THERE A BASIS FOR ONE AT PRESENT ON ANY KIND OF BROAD SPECTRUM) AND THE POLICY OF CONTROLLED DEMOCRACY PRACTICED BY THE RULING FAMILY. WHILE KUWAIT'S LARGE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY POSES A POTENTIAL THREAT, ITS LARGEST SEGMENT, THE PALESTINIANS, HAVE A NEED TO MAINTAIN FAVOR WITH THE RULING FAMILY IN ORDER TO USE KUWAIT AS A BASE FOR OPERATIONS IN OTHER AREAS AND FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT. THE SAME IS TRUE IN VARYING DEGREES FOR OTHER EXPATRIATE ELEMENTS, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS. KUWAITI SECURITY FORCES ARE BEING UPGRADED AND MODERNIZED AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTROL MOST INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE AN INCREASE IN INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN KUWAIT OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, IT IS UNLIKELY THERE WILL BE A RADICAL POLITICAL CHANGE OR COUP. TWO PRIME REASONS ARE THE LACK OF AN ORGANIZED DISSIDENT MOVEMENT (NOR IS THERE A BASIS FOR ONE AT PRESENT ON ANY KIND OF BROAD SPECTRUM), AND THE POLICY OF CONTROLLED DEMOCRACY PRACTICED BY THE RULING FAMILY. KUWAIT'S RELATIVELY BROAD DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND "CRADLE-TO-GRAVE" SOCIAL PROGRAMS HAVE UNDERCUT THE LEFTISTS. THE FACT CERTAIN FAMILIES GET MORE THAN OTHERS IS BASED ON RESIDUAL TRIBALISM, RATHER THAN GOK POLICY. THE TRADITIONAL LEFT IN KUWAIT, THE ARAB NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (ANM), LOST BADLY IN THE LAST ELECTIONS BECAUSE OF ITS OUTMODED RHETORIC.

2. THE ONLY INDIGENOUS RADICAL GROUP IS THE SO-CALLED "STATE SECURITY GROUP", WHICH GOT ITS NAME FOR A SERIES OF BOMB ATTACKS IN 1969 AGAINST GOK SECURITY OFFICES. THIS GROUP HAS LITTLE LOCAL FOLLOWING AND IS INVOLVED MORE IN SUPPORTING REGIONAL
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TERRORIST GROUPS BASED IN KUWAIT THAN IN ANTI-GOK ACTIVITIES. THESE KUWAIT-BASED GULF RADICALS PRESENT NO IMMEDIATE SECURITY PROBLEMS SINCE THEY REQUIRE KUWAIT AS A BASE AND STRICTLY OBSERVE THE RULES OF THIS GAME -- NO POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN KUWAIT AGAINST KUWAIT. THE LONG-TERM PROBLEMS OF THIS SITUATION HAVE BEEN COVERED IN REFTEL (A).

3. THE RULING FAMILY FOLLOWS A POLICY OF DOLING OUT DEMOCRACY

WHENEVER THERE IS PRESSURE TO DO SO. SO FAR THE RATE OF GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY IN KUWAIT HAS BEEN CONTROLLABLE, BUT WITH THE RETURN OF EDUCATED YOUTH, MORE LIBERALS IN GOVERNMENT AND A GREATER SOCIAL AWARENESS, THIS RATE WILL INCREASE RAPIDLY. IF THE GOK PERMITS MORE RAPID POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PRESSURE FROM ITS MORE CONSERVATIVE NEIGHBORS DOES NOT STAND IN ITS WAY, THE BASIS FOR DISSIDENCE WILL NOT EXIST. THE FAMILY RECOGNIZES THIS LIBERAL STAND WILL ERODE SOME OF ITS OWN POWER, BUT IT WILL PROBABLY CHOOSE THIS POLICY. SOME OF THESE CHANGES WILL INCLUDE LEGALIZING POLITICAL PARTIES, LABOR UNIONS AND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN. IF THE GOK DECIDES TO TAKE A TOUGH STAND ON LIBERAL SOCIAL REFORM, THE LIKELIHOOD OF DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS FORMING WILL GROW, BUT IT WILL TAKE TIME FOR THEM TO SORT OUT THEIR IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AND COALESCE INTO A MEANINGFUL FORCE.

4. ANOTHER SOURCE OF POTENTIAL INDIGENOUS DISSIDENCE IS THE MILITARY, ALWAYS A SOURCE OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE ARAB WORLD. WITH NEW ARMS, AND NEW OUTLOOK AND PRESTIGE, THE MILITARY, OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, WILL EVOLVE INTO A POLITICAL FORCE. THE WAY THE GOK HANDLES THE MILITARY'S DEMANDS FOR A GREATER ROLE IN THE COUNTRY WILL DETERMINE WHETHER THE YOUNG OFFICERS GO LOOKING FOR A NASIR IN THEIR RANKS, OR WORK WITHIN GOVERNMENT. THE POWERFUL MERCHANT CLASS WILL ATTEMPT TO LIMIT THE MILITARY'S ROLE, BUT THEY HAVE PROBABLY STARTED TOO LATE. THE GOK WILL HAVE TO BALANCE ITS POSITION BETWEEN THESE TWO FORCES-- NO MEAN TASK. ITS ABILITY TO PLAY A MIDDLEMAN ROLE BETWEEN THE LIBERALS AND THE MILITARY, WHILE KEEPING THE LEFT AT BAY WITH CONTINUED SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAMS, WILL DETERMINE THE LONGEVITY OF THE CURRENT STRUCTURE. THE FAMILY, IS HOWEVER, FLEXIBLE AND HAS A GOOD FEEL FOR LOCAL POLITICS. UNLESS THE BALANCE OF FORCES GETS GREATLY OUT OF HAND, A SITUATION WE BELIEVE UNLIKELY, IT WILL CONTINUE IN ITS PRIME, ALBEIT STEADILY DIMINISHING, ROLE.

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5. THE OTHER MAJOR INTERNAL THREAT COMES FROM THE LARGE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY, WHICH CONSTITUTES APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF KUWAIT. THE LARGEST SINGLE GROUP IS THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY, ABOUT 270,000 IN NUMBER. THIS COMMUNITY IS THE ONLY ONE THAT POSES ANY SERIOUS POTENTIAL THREAT. THE FAIRLY LARGE IRAQI COMMUNITY (ABOUT 17,000), FOR THE MOST PART, IS WAITING FOR BETTER DAYS IN IRAQ AND PROBABLY WOULD NOT AID IRAQ IN ITS TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS DISCUSSED IN REFTEL (D).

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 SCCT-01 OMB-01 EB-07

SAM-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 PM-03 L-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00

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SP-02 IO-10 NIC-01 ACDA-05 /093 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2184

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMB BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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6. THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY IN KUWAIT, WHERE FATAH WAS FOUNDED, IS ALMOST TOTALLY PRO-FATAH AND "MODERATE". IT RECOGNIZES KUWAIT'S FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. IT ALSO APPRECIATES THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE AND WORK IN KUWAIT. IT WOULD TAKE A CATASTROPHIC CHANGE IN KUWAITI POLICY TO CHANGE THIS COMMUNITY'S CURRENT APPRECIATION AND PASSIVE ROLE. FOR ITS PART, THE GOK HAS CLOSE TIES WITH THE PLO OFFICE IN KUWAIT. IT EXPECTS THE PLO TO KEEP THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY IN LINE AND THE PLO HAS DONE THIS. IT ALSO HAS HELPED THE PLO TRACK DOWN "REJECTIONISTS" WHO OPPOSE THE PLO POSITION ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. THERE IS SOME RESENTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY ABOUT ITS POSITION AS "POOR RELATIVE", BUT COMPARED TO ITS POSITION IN OTHER ARAB STATES, THE PLO HAS NO REAL COMPLAINT. AS LONG AS IT NEEDS KUWAIT, AND KUWAIT FOR ITS PROGRESSIVE IMAGE NEEDS THE PLO, THE PALESTINIANS POSE LITTLE THREAT. WE SEE NO IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN THIS MUTUALLY DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP.

7. ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE BOTH HAVE LARGE LOCAL EMBASSIES, THEY KEEP AN EXTREMELY LOW PROFILE. KUWAIT HAS MORE VALUE TO THEM AS A WINDOW ON THE GULF, A PLACE IN WHICH TO CONTACT GULF DISSIDENTS, AND PROOF TO THE OTHER GULF STATES OF THEIR NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS, THAN AS A BASE FOR INTERNAL ACTIVITIES IN KUWAIT. THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE HOPE KUWAIT CAN CONVINCE OTHER GULF STATES, WITH WHOM THEY HAVE YET TO EXCHANGE EMBASSIES, THAT SOVIET AND CHINESE OFFICIAL PRESENCE POSES NO INTERNAL THREAT. SHOULD EITHER OR BOTH ESTABLISH EMBASSIES IN THE LOWER GULF STATES, THEIR CONTACTS WITH AND SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INDIGENOUS RADICAL GROUPS PRESUMABLY WILL INCREASE. IT IS DOUBTFUL, HOWEVER, THAT THE LOWER GULF STATES WILL SANCTION SOVIET OR CHINESE OFFICIAL PRESENCE WITHOUT SAUDI APPROVAL, WHICH APPEARS UNLIKELY.

8. KUWAIT SECURITY FORCES ARE BEING UPGRADED AND MODERNIZED AS A RESULT OF RECENT STUDIES UNDERTAKEN BY FIRMS SPECIALIZED IN INTERNAL SECURITY AFFAIRS. THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGE, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE. THE FEDAYEEN TAKEOVER OF THE JAPANESE EMBASSY IN 1974 AND THE LANDINGS OF SEVERAL HIJACKED AIRCRAFT IN KUWAIT HAVE MODIFIED THE FORMER "IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE" ATTITUDE. THIS CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND BETTER TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT SHOULD GREATLY IMPROVE KUWAIT'S SECURITY FORCES ABILITY TO HANDLE INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEMS BY THE END OF 1975.

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KUWAIT'S INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES ARE COMPOSED OF THE POLICE, WITH A TOTAL OF 7,000 MEMBERS, INCLUDING CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES, AND THE NATIONAL GUARD OF ABOUT 1500 MEN. THE POLICE-FORCE IS EFFICIENT, WELL-TRAINED (FOR CURRENT KUWAIT NEEDS) AND WELL ARMED. BETWEEN THE POLICE FORCE AND THE NATIONAL GUARD THERE IS BEING DEVELOPED A MOBILE EMERGENCY STRIKE FORCE WHICH WILL BE TRAINED IN RIOT AND CROWD CONTROL. A VIP PROTECTION TEAM ALSO IS TO BE

ESTABLISHED. UNDER THE POLICE FORCE THERE ARE CIVIL AND POLITICAL INVESTIGATION AND INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENTS WHICH ARE FAIRLY EFFICIENT. THE NATIONAL GUARD CURRENTLY IS COMPOSED FOR THE MOST PART OF UNEDUCATED TRIBESMEN, BUT A MORE RIGID TRAINING PROGRAM WILL IMPROVE THIS UNIT'S CALIBER IN ABOUT TWO YEARS.
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